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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 001114

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/06/2016

TAGS: [IR](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [TU](#) [TBIO](#) [AMED](#) [EAID](#) [CASC](#) [SENV](#) [EFIN](#) [EAGR](#) [KFLU](#)

SUBJECT: AVIAN INFLUENZA IN IRAN

Classified By: DCM NANCY MCELLOWNEY FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

1. (C) Summary: AI is present only along Iran's eastern and northern borders according to Iranian visa applicants in Ankara. Iranians in the medical field believe that the GOI does not have the plans, the resources, or vaccine stock to handle an AI outbreak. Iranians outside the medical profession, though, have argued that the government has flu vaccines available on hand to mitigate AI cases. End summary.

AFTER THE GOVERNMENT'S AI ANNOUNCEMENT

2. (C) Iranians who work in the medical sector have recently told us that the government does not have enough Tamiflu in stock for an outbreak of AI. A microbiologist with 6 years experience in her field said that the only flu vaccine in stock in Iran is for influenza type B. As far as she knows, the government has not set aside any funds for research into an AI vaccine. A nurse from Esfahan and another nurse from Shiraz confirmed that there were no stocks of flu vaccines in preparation of an AI outbreak at the hospitals where they work. A doctor from Tehran explained that as part of its prevention program the GOI conducts random checks on poultry farms, testing birds for AI. Other than finding out when AI arrives in Iran, though, he said that the government of Iran does not have a plan to address AI.

3. (C) After the government announcement, Iranians were worried about the safety of eating poultry. A family from Tehran told us that the GOI had confirmed that AI was present along Iran's eastern and northern borders but not in Tehran. After the announcement, they stopped eating chicken. An elderly woman from Tehran said that she heard AI has been found in the north of Iran, and she stopped eating chicken as well. A woman from Shiraz said that the government news reported that AI was along Iran's borders but no further. A medical researcher from Tehran said that she still ate poultry but now makes sure that the poultry is fully cooked. She said the GOI was airing public service announcements on how to properly cook poultry. She believed that the GOI was working with WHO on AI.

PRIOR TO THE DISCOVERY OF AI

4. (C) Prior to the GOI's announcement of AI, most non-expert Iranians we spoke with believed that the government had an elaborate prevention program in place. An elderly couple from Ghazvin explained that since the GOI had vaccines for the entire population, there was no reason to worry. An accountant who worked at the Ministry of Agriculture said that the government had a plan to import vaccines when AI arrived in Iran. Other applicants said that the government would give out vaccines when people showed signs of having contracted AI.

5. (C) Applicants had great faith in the government's screening methods at the borders to stop AI from entering Iran although they were unclear on what the government was doing or how AI spreads. Some believed that the GOI was vigilantly screening imports and others believed that crossing the Iran-Turkey border was prohibited (despite the fact that they themselves were in Turkey for visa interviews).
WILSON